

In the Claims:

1. (Amended) A biopolymer sponge tube which is closed at one end and which is of uniform composition and construction.

18. (Amended) A method for stapling mammalian tissue comprising the steps of:  
placing the tissue between a staple cartridge and an anvil in a surgical stapler;  
fitting a closed-end biopolymer sponge tube of uniform composition and construction over the staple cartridge and/or over the anvil; and  
firing at least one staple from the staple cartridge through the biopolymer sponge tube and through the tissue to thereby attach the biopolymer sponge tube to the tissue.

REMARKS

Support for amendment to claims 1 and 18 may be found in the specification, for example in Example 1 and Figures 2 (a) to 2 (d) which clearly depict a closed-end tube of uniform "composition" and "construction". The amended claims clearly distinguish over the primary art reference US 5,843,096 ("Igaki") which requires sutures or glue to form a closed-end bag.

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Please charge any fees which may be required for this submission to Johnson & Johnson

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Respectfully submitted,

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